



In This Chapter:

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- "Riding With Buffalo Bill"*
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The Serials of Sam Katzman



ducer for A. W. Hackel on a series of Bob Steele westerns released by Supreme. Having seen the profits to be made on Poverty Row, Katzman arranged to obtain the Bryan Foy studios in Culver City, CA, where he formed his own Victory Pictures in mid 1935 and began producing westerns, action thrillers—and ser-

He may not have been a purveyor of excellence when it came to producing, but Sam Katzman was prolific (238 films as producer) and he always seemed to have his finger on the pulse of the times, knowing exactly what the viewing public wanted. Born July 7, 1901, in New York City, at 13 Sam entered the film industry at the old Fox Studios as a prop boy. From 1914 to 1933 he worked his way up the ladder, serving as everything from prop boy to production manager at firms like First National, Cosmopolitan and Showmen's Pictures. By '34 Sam was supervising pro-

Thrills and Chills and Shivering Shocks as a Crazy Scientist Terrorizes the Underworld!

VICTORY PICTURES
SAM KATZMAN presents

Bela LUGOSI
in
SHADOW OF CHINATOWN

with
HERMAN BRIX Directed by **BOB HILL**
LUANA WALTERS SUPERVISED BY
JOAN BARCLAY **SAM KATZMAN**
MAURICE LIU

15 THRILLING CHAPTERS

ials. Through January of 1940, Victory turned out 30 feature films (many with Tom Tyler and Tim McCoy) and two serials, "Shadow of Chinatown" and "Blake of Scotland Yard". Olympic decathlon champion Herman Brix (later Bruce Bennett), who had starred in "The New Adventures of Tarzan" ('35), was hired by Sam to star in five features and the 15 chapter serial, "Shadow of Chinatown" ('36), also with Bela Lugosi. Compared to what Republic and Universal offered, "Shadow of Chinatown" was an embarrassment. Sam spent nearly all his budget on Lugosi, Brix and Joan Barclay, leaving little for production values. "Shadow..." had a complicated plot, moved slowly and was light on action. Sam maximized his profits by editing the serial into a feature as well. Sam and director Bob Hill picked up the pace dramatically with their second serial, "Blake of Scotland Yard" ('37) which starred Ralph Byrd, Herbert Rawlinson, Joan Barclay and Dickie Jones. It was an out-and-out action-packed mixture of atmospheric horror, mystery and science fiction. It too was released in a feature version. With the cessation of Sam's Tim McCoy series, Victory closed its doors and Sam went over to Monogram where, from 1940-1947, he produced more than three dozen B-pictures starring The East Side Kids, Bela Lugosi and The Teen Agers. No more serials til '45 when he began to also work for Columbia, whom he joined exclusively in '47. His first serial for Columbia was "Brenda Starr, Reporter" ('45) of which star J o a n Woodbury (right) said,



"It was made during the war and everybody was hungry, including me. My former husband had gone off to war. I was left with a little daughter. So you grabbed anything you could grab and, believe me, you were very grateful for anything that came along. This was a 13 episode thing, in 21 days! The only reason they gave me the role was the fact I could learn dialogue fast enough to do everything in one take. The most memorable thing is, on the last night, the back of the set was one solid bar and there wasn't an inch of space between one bottle and the next. Everybody was waiting for the wrap-up, so we could have a party! But I had 19 pages of dialogue on a telephone, with nobody talking back to me. It's great if an actor talks back, you can at least ad lib on his ad libs. When you have nobody talking back, you've got nobody to ad lib you. So I'd look at a page and say, 'Okay, let's do it,' pick up the phone and we'd shoot it. I shot all 19 sequences in one take, because they were going to kill me if I didn't, with all that booze waiting; and I proceeded to get bombed after that. (Laughs) Sam, at least, realized it was cheaper to hire a stuntlady than break my leg. So I didn't fall out of windows...I didn't have any fun at all. (Laughs) I didn't care to do any more serials with scripts like a telephone book." Columbia then dismissed producer Rudolph C. Flothow and made Sam their sole serial producer. From '45 through the end of the serial era in '56, Sam produced 32 serials for Columbia.

- Brenda Starr, Reporter ('45) Joan Woodbury, Kane Richmond
- Jungle Raiders ('45) Kane Richmond
- Who's Guilty ('45) Robert Kent
- Hop Harrigan ('46) William Bakewell
- Chick Carter, Detective ('46) Lyle Talbot
- Son of the Guardsman ('46) Robert Shaw
- Jack Armstrong ('47) John Hart
- The Vigilante ('47) Ralph Byrd
- Sea Hound ('47) Buster Crabbe
- Brick Bradford ('47) Kane Richmond
- Tex Granger ('48) Robert Kellard

- Superman ('48) Kirk Alyn
- Congo Bill ('48) Don McGuire
- Bruce Gentry ('49) Tom Neal
- Batman and Robin ('49) Robert Lowery
- Adventures of Sir Galahad ('49) George Reeves
- Cody of the Pony Express ('50) Jock Mahoney, Dickie Moore
- Atom Man Vs. Superman ('50) Kirk Alyn
- Pirates of the High Seas ('50) Buster Crabbe
- Roar of the Iron Horse ('51) Jock Mahoney
- Mysterious Island ('51) Richard Crane
- Captain Video ('51) Judd Holdren
- King of the Congo ('52) Buster Crabbe
- Blackhawk ('52) Kirk Alyn
- Son of Geronimo ('52) Clayton Moore
- Lost Planet ('53) Judd Holdren
- Great Adventures of Captain Kidd ('53) Richard Crane, David Bruce
- Gunfighters of the Northwest ('54) Jock Mahoney, Clayton Moore
- Riding with Buffalo Bill ('54) Marshall Reed, Rick Vallin
- Adventures of Captain Africa ('55) John Hart
- Perils of the Wilderness ('56) Dennis Moore, Richard Emory
- Blazing the Overland Trail ('56) Lee Roberts, Dennis Moore



Sam Katzman and director Spencer Gordon Bennet at Columbia in the late '40s. Appears to be some sort of walkie-talkie Sam has in his ear and hand.

Not only did Sam use the same leads over and over, he also relied on a "stock" company of supporting actors, dependable heavies and character

people like Jack Ingram, Charlie King, Rusty Wescoatt, John Merton, Zon Murray, Terry Frost, Jim Diehl, Eddie Parker, Leonard Penn, I. Stanford Jolley, Frank Ellis, John Hart, Hugh Prosser, Rick Vallin, Gene Roth, Wheeler Oakman, Robert Barron, Pierce Lyden, William Fawcett, Pierre Watkin, Nelson Leigh, Anthony Warde, Don Harvey, Stanley Price, Marshall Reed, Charles Quigley, Bud Osborne, Ralph Hodges, Nick Stuart, Lee Roberts, Tommy Farrell and others. Perhaps one of the most revealing anecdotes regarding Sam's personality comes from Gloria Marlen (right) who made several features for Sam, including "Trouble Chasers" ('45) and "Sweet Genevieve" ('47). "He was quite a card! Katzman liked dirty jokes, he would go around and tell everybody dirty jokes. One night we had worked until 8 o'clock when he came up and said I want to tell you a joke. Noel Neill was standing next to me. He started to tell a joke and I said, 'Look, I don't like dirty jokes, please don't tell me anything like that.' Well, he told it anyway. I blocked it out but Noel just died laughing. That's what he wanted. Well, he got mad at me, hurt that I didn't want to hear his joke. Also he had a terrible cane that had a finger on the end of it...if you bent over, I don't care who you were, he...well, you know. That cane, and nobody would say anything. Well, my husband, the next morning, came out to see me on the set. Katzman was sitting there with a group of people. My husband walked over and said, 'Mr. Katzman, don't you...as long as you live, tell a dirty joke around my wife again.' Katzman got furious, 'Don't you ever walk on a set of mine either,' they had a little thing going. So later, when I interviewed for 'Sweet



"Sweet Genevieve" ('47). "He was quite a card! Katzman liked dirty jokes, he would go around and tell everybody dirty jokes. One night we had worked until 8 o'clock when he came up and said I want to tell you a joke. Noel Neill was standing next to me. He started to tell a joke and I said, 'Look, I don't like dirty jokes, please don't tell me anything like that.' Well, he told it anyway. I blocked it out but Noel just died laughing. That's what he wanted. Well, he got mad at me, hurt that I didn't want to hear his joke. Also he had a terrible cane that had a finger on the end of it...if you bent over, I don't care who you were, he...well, you know. That cane, and nobody would say anything. Well, my husband, the next morning, came out to see me on the set. Katzman was sitting there with a group of people. My husband walked over and said, 'Mr. Katzman, don't you...as long as you live, tell a dirty joke around my wife again.' Katzman got furious, 'Don't you ever walk on a set of mine either,' they had a little thing going. So later, when I interviewed for 'Sweet

Genevieve', I went in and Katzman said, 'I'm not going to work with you anymore. Your husband can't come into...blah, blah, blah...' The director, Arthur Dreifuss, had seen me in some other work I had done and he asked for me to do this part, so Katzman said, 'Well, I'll show you. I'm not going to pay your price.' I said, 'Look, you'd be silly because anybody else you'll get at the price you're offering, they will not know their lines, it's going to delay everything. You're not going to have a good film.' Anyway, Arthur Dreifuss walked in and said, 'Sam, you're not going to do this.



I want Gloria and you're not going to pull that stuff on her. Now go ahead and sign the contract.' Which he did."

KATZMAN KOMMENTS

Joan Barclay had a long relationship with Sam Katzman's Victory Pictures ('35-'40) and worked for Sam on "Shadow of Chinatown", "Blake of Scotland Yard" and again on East Side Kids films at Monogram. "He was a very nice man. He had a wife that...somebody called her a bitch on wheels...she had red hair and an awful temper, but she was nice to me. I went on a couple of trips with the Katzmans; down to Caliente with them. Somebody got kind of fresh with me, so I told the little bitch on wheels. She said, 'Well, you should expect that.' So I got out, got on a bus and went home."

Noel Neill: "I'd done the Teen Agers and the 'Brick Bradford' serial for Sam before 'Superman'. His wife was quite a horse player. I had a lot of friends that would go to the track and we'd always see Hortense...with her red hair, usually a fuchsia, or a lime dress and a silver mink (laughs), so we could

all spot Hortense. She loved the horses. I was given the Lois Lane role in 'Superman' without having to audition for the part. Physically, I resembled the character in the comic books."

Kirk Alyn: "The morning after the flying scenes (were shot for 'Superman') everyone gathered to see the rushes. It was wonderful to see the Man of Steel nose-diving and banking around with the greatest of ease—but—*there* were the wires, plain to see! When the lights came on, a lot of faces were bright red. Sam Katzman's voice was loud and clear. The whole special effects crew was fired summarily for not having done their homework by pre-testing invisible wiring."

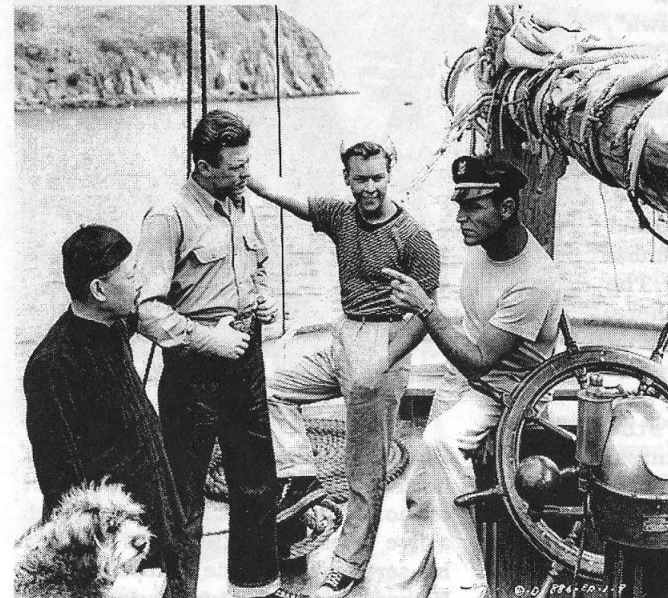
Herman Brix (Bruce Bennett): "I was in almost every scene. Several times I didn't even go home at night while making 'Shadow of Chinatown.' I slept on a cot at the studio. That was before there was any Screen Actors Guild. You worked for the producer. Cost was the only consideration."

Pierce Lyden: "To me, the greatest all time producer of serials was Sam Katzman. He had 15 years or so ten-

ure at Columbia and I was with him off and on the whole time. (Katzman) may not have paid the biggest salaries in town, but it was five to six weeks steady work on each one. The 'Bossman', as Sam was known to his friends, was the most prolific serial producer around. He kept the wolf from my door many years. He was loyal and easy to work for. He always remembered the supporting actors, his stock company. Serials at Columbia were always fun. They were tough, long hours and six days a week, but you were with the best experienced action actors, the kind of guys that loved what they were doing and knew how to get the job done."

Buster Crabbe: "'Sea Hound' and 'Pirates of the High Seas' could have been the same picture. A lot of location work out on the ocean. We did a lot of fishing between takes. It was fun. 'King of the Kongo' was a cheater for a serial, but I think it had enough to keep the kids entertained."

Ralph Hodges ('Superman', "Sea Hound", "Bruce Gentry", "Mysterious Island"): "Sam was a character, a real



Captain Silver (Buster Crabbe) of "The Sea Hound" explains his next move to Spencer Chan, James Lloyd and Ralph Hodges.

cut-up, always joking around. He carried this cane that he *nudged* everybody with—I say nudged to be kind. (Laughs) Terry Frost carved in wood, and made what he called 'The Fickle Finger of Fate'. Well, Katzman had one on the end of a cane. (Chuckles) One of my exciting episodes with Katzman—I was making 'The Sea Hound' at Catalina. On weekends I would take a little lap-straight rowboat out...I rigged a sail on it out of a bath curtain and I would sail out to sea. But the boat didn't have any leeboards or anything, so when I got out about 3-4 miles from the beach I'd take the sail down and row back. One weekend, I went out sailing, got out there, and guess what? No oars! Somebody had taken the oars! I was now heading for the open ocean! I cut the boat back toward the island as tight as I could, but I couldn't sail very well against the wind...there was an offshore breeze. Somebody on the pier saw I was in trouble and they called Sam Katzman. He chartered a seaplane and came out looking for 'his kid.' (Laughs) From then on I had the nickname of Mile-

Away. (Chuckles) End result was, I had gotten back to the island but I was barefoot and had to climb a 50 ft. chopped cliff then walk through all these prickly pear cactus beds back to the Isthmus... this was on the other end from Avalon. Sam had to have a doctor come and remove all the cactus spines, which were *sizable*, so I could go to work the next day. Later in life, I was working with a

CBS TV station in Las Vegas for a couple of years as program production manager. Sam and his wife Hortense—they called her Hortie—bright red hair...My wife went upstairs with her while Sam and I were in the lobby of a casino...he was gambling and I was watching. We turned around and looked at the staircase where my wife and Hortie, who's probably in her late 60s, were coming down the stairs. Hortie was wearing a full length mink coat that's in giant one-foot-square checkerboards of bright, brilliant, crimson and white. People are turning around to see this wildly dressed woman coming down the staircase. Hortie turned to my wife and made this comment, which I thought was great, 'You see darling, I've still got it!' (Laughs) I had a crush on Katzman's daughter Ruthie (when I was doing the serials) but I don't think I was ready for the hurdles I would have to jump...(laughs) so I didn't get too deeply involved. But doing 'The Sea Hound', I fell in love with boats and I'm *still* in love with boats."

Michael Fox ("Blackhawk", "Lost Planet", "Riding With Buffalo Bill", "Adventures of Captain Africa"): "'Blackhawk' was shot at a studio right near the corner of Sunset and Hollywood Blvd. It's now a Ralph's Market. It was owned by Columbia and Katzman leased it. The interiors were shot there, the exteriors at Columbia Ranch. The serials were terribly hard work. 15 episodes in 17 days. That's the equivalent to five features in 17 days. Sam used to walk around carrying a riding crop—I don't know if that was to goose the girls, or what. He was a rather unpretentious looking man—he wasn't small, but he had no chin. I got along splendidly with Sam, although

for some reason I think he regarded me as an intellectual. I think anybody who had gone past the sixth grade was an intellectual to Sam."

Stuntman Gil Perkins: "Sam started making serials at a studio on Santa Monica Blvd., across from the Hollywood cemetery. It was called Larry Darmour Studio. Later he went over onto the Columbia Sunset Studio, which before that had been Tiffany-Stahl, near the corner of Sunset and Hollywood Blvd."

John Archer: "He was a sweetheart, really, but he was a rebel. He was kind of a different type of guy—a cigar chompin' kind of producer. Inwardly, he was a real nice man, but he didn't show it too often."

John Hart ("Jack Armstrong", "Brick Bradford", "Adventures of Captain Africa", others): "Sam was an absolute genius at making low-budget pictures.



Claire James and John Hart are in trouble again in "Jack Armstrong".

He never made a real *good* picture, but he always made money. Sam put a lot of money into 'Jack Armstrong' with a five week schedule where most of his serials were made in three weeks. He had a group of actors who were very loyal to him. He *hated* drinking—any-

body who was a boozier didn't work for Sam. I could just walk in to Sam, if I couldn't make my car payment or something and say, 'Hey Sam, can you use me in something?' He never let me down. I'd always get to do something, big or little. Ol' Sam was always a friend. He loved horse racing and spent a lot of time at Santa Anita. I remember one day he lost thousands of dollars. On the trip back he was very grim—nobody said a word. When you worked for him he was stingy as hell, but person to person he was generous. And he loved lobster. His brother Dave was his production manager, and Dave's son Lennie Katzman has become a big producer, 'Dallas' was his big show. He put me on 'Dallas' as a senator at a trial. I sat there for 10 days making a fat salary."

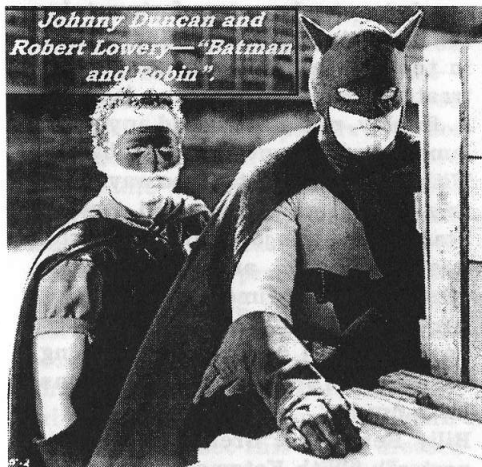
Linda Johnson ("Brick Bradford"): "I don't have anything nice to say about Sam. He was lecherous. Very. Not so



Rick Vallin, Kane Richmond and Linda Johnson confer in "Brick Bradford".

much to me, because, fortunately, somebody told me when I first started in that business, if you want to be treated like a lady, act like a lady. So I...frankly, really never had any problems. I never invited any problems. With Katzman, right off, no way. Anyway, there was a young girl, Helene Stanley, she was just darling and she was fairly young, and Sam was just after her all the time. I felt sorry for her because she didn't know how to cope with it. I don't mean anything serious happened but he was just...crude."

Billy Benedict ("Brenda Starr, Reporter"): "With Katzman, (you) were on a strict budget and got by just as cheap as they could, and didn't worry about a lot of things they *should* have. Katzman would hang around with his cane and beat the floor when things weren't going well. Maybe sometimes he'd even try to beat you! (Laughs) (On the East Side Kids pictures) Sam and (series lead) Leo Gorcey couldn't get along, so Leo and his agent, Jan Grippo, made a deal together and started producing the pictures themselves. Now we were the Bowery Boys." Spencer Bennet directed 21 of Katzman's Columbia serials: "The budgets were getting thinned out (by the time I arrived). They were cheating a lot, using stock footage. Budgets were usually around \$8,000 an episode. We spent more on 'Superman'. I remember the animation was \$32 a foot. Katzman accepted that. They could have drawn it a little better for twice that amount. (At Columbia there was) one rehearsal and one take. The minute I would finish a scene, I knew exactly what the next setup was going to be. I would have it all mapped out. I kept the crew busy. I don't know any other director who cut in the camera as I did. I said to Katzman, 'You aren't paying me anything on these pictures. I'm saving you my salary on the lab bill.' And I did."



Johnny Duncan and Robert Lowery—"Batman and Robin".

Johnny Duncan ("Batman and Robin"): "Sam had a bit of P. T. Barnum in him. He could always get the most out of his people."

House Peters Jr. ("Batman and Robin"): "I remember one time going with my agent, Jack Pomeroy, to various studios. I remember going to Columbia. I sat in the outer office and Jack said, 'I'll go in to see Sam and see if I can't get you a raise.' The door was open so I could hear the conversation. Pomeroy is talking to Katzman and he says, 'I think it's about time you gave House a raise.' I was getting \$35 or \$50 a day—whatever it was. Jack says, 'Surely he's worth another \$25.' Katzman comes back, 'I can't do it, we're on a very tight budget.' Just then, Sam says, 'Excuse me a moment' and reaches for the phone. He dials the number, and it's his bookie! He bets \$1,000 on a horse—to win, for God's sake! Usually, win or place, but just to win! He hangs up, turns back to Pomeroy, 'I'll do the best I can for House, but...' (Laughs) Can't give me a \$25 raise, but he bets \$1,000 to win at the racetrack. He used to come on the set, he was a great one with that stick, going after the gals. He just loved to goose people! Never got me with it though. Everyone needed a job, so we put up with his antics. But he was a pleasant sort of a guy."

The '50s and '60s saw Sam making Jungle Jim, western, sci-fi and teenage musicals for Columbia, juvenile delinquent films for Columbia and AIP, even Elvis Presley musicals at MGM. Katzman had a way of catching the wave of a fad and grinding out a film before it faded away. The legendary "Jungle Sam" Katzman died August 4, 1973, at 72.

CLASSIFIED ADS

(10¢ a word, Address on cover)

Vol. II and III of FEATURE PLAYERS: STORIES BEHIND THE FACES can be ordered for \$23.85 (includes postage) each from Tom and Jim Goldrup, PO Box 425, Ben Lomond, CA 95005. Personal interviews with actors from the golden age of Hollywood. Our book GROWING UP ON THE SET includes 39 personal interviews with former child actors who talk candidly about their experiences on and off the set, people they worked with (including cowboy stars Gene Autry, John Wayne, Rod Cameron, Randolph Scott, Hoot Gibson, Joel McCrea, William Boyd, James Stewart and others), and what they did after their careers ended. The pros and cons of being a child actor and the effects it had on them later in life are discussed at great length. This book is available through <amazon.com> or McFarland, Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640 for \$35 plus \$4 shipping. Send SASE to the Goldrups for a list of performers included in these four books. We also have available for sale copies of the book ACTORS ONLY written by Terry Frost in 1977. \$18.85 ppd. Composed primarily of talks Frost delivered while he was an instructor at a West Coast drama school.

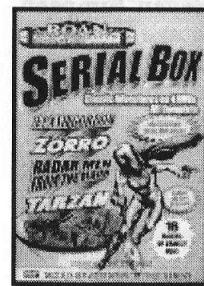


SERIAL WEBSITES

Images Journal website has an animated gif of stuntman Yakima Canutt doing the horse-to-stage transfer and more from "Zorro's Fighting Legion" serial. <imagesjournal.com/issue04/infocus/stagecoach.htm>



1956, the \$95 (!) hardcover "highlights 446 serial performers who thrilled generations. Each entry includes performers' birth and death dates and details of life before and after movies as well as covering his or her major films." Advance advertising oddly shows the book with a non-serial Bela Lugosi "Dracula" cover!?!)



A unique "Serial Box" of four serials on DVD, designed to replicate a cereal box, is being released by the Roan Group, a division of Troma. Included are "New Adventures of Tarzan", "Zorro's Fighting Legion", "Flash Gordon Conquers the Universe" and "Radar Men From the Moon". Price is \$29.95.

Silver Screen Classics: A new Canadian digital channel hosts a treasure trove of B-movies, westerns, serials, cartoons. In one week of January alone SR counted over 22 B-westerns being aired as well as lengthy one-hour blocks of serials such as "The Lone Ranger" (reportedly uncut without Spanish subtitles), "Junior G-Men" and "Lost City". Full schedule online at <www.silverscreenclassics.com> Sadly, only available in Canada.

Author Buck Rainey is completing a book entitled SERIAL FILM STARS, to be published by McFarland. A biographical dictionary encompassing 1912-

A "Flash Gordon" Ch. 10 title card sold for \$2,700 in Bruce Hershenson's December online auction. Ch. 10 scene cards ranged from \$676 to \$1,558.



Columbia's 1949 "Batman and Robin" has been released by Columbia Tri-Star Home Video. The two disc DVD box art has been drastically modernized and in no way resembles Robert Lowery and Johnny Duncan.

WORTH ANOTHER LOOK

by Ken Weiss

The plot of "Wild West Days" ('37) couldn't be more conventional: a rancher, Larry Munro (Frank McGlynn) who's having trouble with land grabbers, sends for help from old friend Kentucky Wade (John Mack Brown). Kentucky and three of his friends show up at Larry's Circle B Ranch, just outside of Brimstone—where "the Indians are bad but the whites are even worse." A criminal group, the Secret Seven, kidnap Larry when they discover an ore sample he's brought in to be assayed is rich in platinum. They've wanted his land all along so they can control the entire area, but now they determine to get it from him (he's unaware of its value) by hook or by crook, and that's pretty much the story, with little variation. The intro titles for Chapters 5 through 8 all begin the same way: "Larry Munro is a prisoner of the Secret Seven who are trying to make him reveal the location of a

platinum deposit." Despite its pedestrian nature, "Wild West Days" is nonetheless consistently entertaining and has to rank among the best of western serials for



several reasons, not the least of which is its stellar cast. Readers of this column know I have a weakness for bit players and character actors—I love ‘em—and this serial has an abundance of them. Kentucky Wade’s number one sidekick is “Trigger” Benson—Bob Kortman in a rare good-guy role. I’ve written about Kortman before and won’t repeat myself here, except to say his craggy face is a welcome addition to any movie. In this one, his menacing appearance is played to good advantage, especially in a scene (Ch. 13) in which he slowly advances upon Keeler, the head bad guy, who aims a gun at Kortman and threatens to shoot, but becomes totally unnerved by Trigger’s grim, menacing expression, shown in delightful close up. And unlike most of Kortman’s other films, he gets to smile a lot in this one. Mike, Kentucky’s number two buddy, is played by Frank Yaconelli, who adapts a broad Mexican accent borrowed from Leo Carrillo to provide alleged comedy relief. Kentucky’s third buddy is The Dude (George Shelley), younger than the others, and more interested in serenading the heroine, Lucy (Lynn Gilbert), than anything else. One of the songs he croons, “Song of the

“Sage” (written by Kay Kellogg, who also wrote Jungle Jim’s song, “I’m Takin’ the Jungle Trail”), is actually pretty good. (I wonder if she wrote Ace Drummond’s

song, “Give Me a Ship and a Song,” which is uncredited.) Leading the roster of bad guys is Russell Simpson who plays Matt Keeler, ostensibly the “law and order” publisher of the BRIMSTONE NEWS, but really the leader of the Secret Seven. Simpson, born in 1880, was a stage performer who got into movies in 1910 (his first known film is “The Virginian” in 1914). His career encompassed at least 221 films or shorts, the last being “The Horse Soldiers” in ‘59. In most of his films he played a rural, no-nonsense type, and usually had few, if any, lines, but in “Wild West Days” he’s a major character with plenty to do. His unflappable Matt Keeler is a very cool customer indeed, smoothly turning potential defeats into potential victories. He alternates from affable (when he’s conning the townsfolk) to ruthless (when dealing with his gang) with oily ease. The Secret Seven hold Larry prisoner in a cave behind a waterfall, the gang’s hideout. Among the bad guys, one of the Secret Seven is the half-breed Buckskin, played by Charles Stevens, another actor who rarely had meaty roles but who has a juicy part here. Stevens is fascinating in that there is so little documentation about his background. A num-

ber of sources say he’s the grandson of Geronimo, although there is no birth certificate that would provide researchers with valuable information to follow up, and his filmography is (as with most bit players) tentative. It seems certain he made his film debut in “The Birth of a Nation” (‘15) and one reliable source says he was in all but one of Doug Fairbanks’ silent pictures. (The exception seems to be “Mark of Zorro”.) All in all he appeared in at least 177 movies (not counting TV work), the last being “The Outsider” in ‘62. (Stevens is only one of 314 heavies profiled in Boyd Magers/Bob Nareau/Bobby Copeland’s upcoming BEST OF THE BADMEN book due out in June.) As Buckskin, the Secret Seven member who is the group’s contact man with the local Indian tribe—which he is able to manipu-

late at will—he gets to say lines like, upon hearing that Kentucky has survived an Indian attack, “He’s the first white man to ever escape from Red Hatchet.”

The Secret Seven’s other accomplices read like a film buff’s dream. There is one shot (in Ch. 2) that contains Russell Simpson, Charles Stevens, Al Bridge, William Royle, Walter Miller and Francis McDonald—sensory overload for me. For the first seven chapters badguy Walter Miller, as Doc Hardy, doesn’t have much to do, mostly brandishing a see-gar, making pithy

remarks and standing by the window inside the BRIMSTONE NEWS office so he can announce that Kentucky is riding into town after being reported dead, which occurs with startling regularity (at least five times). Miller is pretty much dormant until Ch. 9, in which he suddenly becomes a pivotal figure, only to be killed off halfway into the chapter, shot in the back by Keeler. The serial has other virtues, aside from its cast. Production values are maximized (hats off to producers Henry MacRae and Ben Koenig), and the serial’s “look” is that of a feature. There’s a lot of scenic splendor, in locations obviously chosen for their beauty. Good use of stock footage enhances all the big scenes. There are some good cliffhanger endings: a stagecoach crashing down a mountainside to end



Frank Yaconelli, Lynn Gilbert, Bob Kortman, Frank McGlynn (seated), George Shelly and Johnny Mack Brown as seen in “Wild West Days”.

Ch. 1, Kentucky and Trigger caught on a rope bridge as boulders are dropped upon them (Ch. 3), or Ch. 6 when Kentucky has been knocked unconscious by Francis

McDonald and lies helpless in a horseless, out-of-control flaming wagon loaded with dynamite which careens down a steep slope and explodes. There’s an ambitious gold rush scene in Ch. 8, in which the citizens of Brimstone virtually abandon the town in a mad drive to get to gold supposedly discovered by a prospector but really part of Keeler’s machinations. There’s excellent use of

stock shots and the scene achieves a degree of genuine spectacle, ending with the onrushing, galloping gold-rushers and their wagons about to trample helpless heroine Lucy Munro (Lynn Gilbert), Larry's sister. As with most serials, there is also no shortage of cheater resolutions: at the end of Ch. 8 we see Lucy among the hooves of the onrushing gold-rushers, but the beginning of Ch. 9 shows she awakened, saw what was happening and merely stepped out of the way of the rushers. The end of Ch. 9 has Kentucky and Dude trapped in a raging forest fire, with huge trees crashing down upon them, an ending which has no resolution at the beginning of Ch. 10, which starts with them presumed dead yet again. When they show up later, Kentucky explains that "our horses found a way out." In one scene Kentucky is locked in mortal hand-to-hand combat with Buckskin in a small room, but still manages to shoot four Indians as they file, one by one, through a narrow opening, in what should be a dramatic but is actually a funny scene. Don't let these minor imperfections deter you. If you haven't seen "Wild West Days" in a while, it's well worth another look.

COLUMBIA CLIFFHANGER CASTS

TODAY! ANOTHER THRILLING CHAPTER!

RIDING WITH BUFFALO BILL

CHAMPION OF THE ROARING WEST!

A COLUMBIA SUPER-SERIAL

Actor	Character
Marshall Reed	Bill Cody
Rick Vallin	Reb Morgan
Joanne Rio	Maria Perez
Shirley Whitney	Ruth Morgan

Jack Ingram	Ace
William Fawcett	Rocky Ford
Gregg Barton	Bart
Ed Coch	Jose Perez
Steve Ritch	Elko
Pierce Lyden	Darr
Michael Fox	King Carney
Lee Roberts	Zeke
John Truex	Luke
Al Cantor	Clem
Al Ferguson	Wounded Outlaw (Ch. 11)
Terry Frost	Man shot (Ch. 1); Railroad man (Ch. 4)
Ray Jones	Outlaw (Ch. 3)
??	Outlaw killed (Ch. 4)
Herman Hack	Outlaw
??	Talkative Outlaw (Ch. 11)
??	Leader of Outlaw group of 4
??	Captured Outlaw (Ch. 12)
Neyle Morrow	Outlaw

Fifteen chapters of non-stop action and stock footage from DEADWOOD DICK and Bill Elliott serials as two-count 'em, two—ridin' terrors (Marshall Reed and Rick Vallin), with the help of old-timer William Fawcett, continuously battle boss Michael Fox and his outlaws (Jack Ingram, Gregg Barton, Pierce Lyden). Writer George Plympton stitched together a more-or-less "script" from very liberal doses of stock. These latter day patchwork Columbia serials must have been an editor's nightmare! Some of the stock footage is repeated as much as three times in this serial. See the originals instead. Zon Murray, often listed in the cast, is *not* in "Riding With Buffalo Bill". Lots of stock footage from "Deadwood Dick" is utilized, as well as some from "Tex Granger", "Cody of the Pony Express" and the oft used famous scene of Indians crossing the Wind River north of Lander, WY, filmed for Tim McCoy's "War Paint" ('26 MGM). (Cast compiled by Boyd Magers.)



CLIFFHANGER COMMENTARY

by Bruce Dettman

For nearly a decade, I lived on Dashiell Hammett Way in what is thought to be the very same San Francisco apartment where the great hardboiled detective author briefly resided in the '20s. Although not much to look at, I rather liked thinking the embryonic seeds for the creation of Sam Spade, the Continental Op and Nick and Nora Charles might have begun taking form in the terrain I now called home, but I have to admit that not once in all my time there did I give attention to the author's lesser known brainchild, "Secret Agent X-9". The character of Secret Agent X-9 was created by King Features

in 1934 as a comic strip feature in response to the great success of Chester Gould's Dick Tracy. Alex Raymond, who would become famous for "Flash Gordon", was hired to illustrate the work and Hammett was brought in to write the material. He lasted for only four stories and was re-

placed, temporarily, by Leslie Charteris, creator of The Saint. In the comics, X-9 was a kind of hybrid, a government agent who nonetheless operated in the style of a seasoned private dick. It never really became a great success, but was popular enough to prompt Universal to use it for the basis of two serials featuring the character, once in '37 and a later version (same title) in '45. The latter incarnation has the title character engaged in an undercover effort to foil the attempts of the Japanese government to create an artificial fuel source for their planes and bombs. Situating X-9 on neutral Shadow Island in '43, screenwriters Joseph O'Donnell and Patricia Harper have him up to his neck in dangerous intrigue and offbeat characters—who when not trying to

WORLD'S FAVORITE ADVENTURE-STRIP HERO
CRASHES THE SCREEN IN SMASHING ACTION!

Thrilling Mystery!
Roaring Combats!
Blasting enemy smugglers
out of their lair!

SECRET AGENT X-9

13 CHAPTERS OF BIGANTIC THRILLS!

with
JAN WILEY
LLOYD BRIDGES
KEYE LUKE
VICTORIA HORNE
EDMUND COBB
SAMUEL S. HINDS

shoot, down or burn X-9, hang out in the smoke-filled House of Shadow cantina. The late Lloyd Bridges, who stars as X-9, built a long and solid career in motion pictures playing in nearly every genre, working at a variety of studios and being on both sides of the law. He was resourceful and depen-

dable and usually played the good guy (although in films like "Try and Get Me" he could wear a black hat with the best of them) and can be found in everything from a Three Stooges short to the classic "High Noon". Yet, to a lot of people, he will always be best remembered as Mike Nelson, the underwater protagonist of TV's early syndicated series "Sea Hunt" that ran for years and which, just for the record, I too loved as a kid. He stars here in "Secret Agent X-9" (Scott Kolk played the character in the '37 version) and does his usual competent and professional job in this, his only serial appearance. He's not the hardboiled wise guy of Hammett's creation nor is he exactly a no-nonsense, by the book agent either. He's breezy and relaxed but knows how to get the job done. He's easy to like. Aiding Bridges in the Allied cause are the always-dependable Keye Luke as his Chinese ally and blonde Jan Wiley who pretends to be working for the Japanese spreading broadcast propaganda. Also in the cast are the late Victoria Horne (whose other serial work included the evil Indian princess in "The Scarlet Horseman", but who I will always remember as the busybody sister-in-law in "The Ghost and Mrs. Muir") as Nabura, head of the Black Dragon Intelligence Service, Samuel S. Hinds, Cy Kendall, Benson Fong, Edmund Cobb, Jack Overman, Gene Stutenroth (later Roth) and George Lynn. The great stuntman Dale Van Sickel also shows up as a truck driver not long for this world and I. Stanford Jolley also appears briefly. It seems to me there are two kinds of serials, those where the cliffhanger provides the main impetus and direction for the action and progression of the storyline, and those where the cliffhanger is

almost an impediment to the flow of the action, where it is interjected simply because it is a cliffhanger and must be inserted even if it seems a clumsy addition. "Secret Agent X-9" falls into the latter category with the majority of the cliffhangers feeling a bit intrusive and out of place. The film could easily exist as a straight espionage effort, the sort of patriotic B-efforts studios turned out by the bushel during WW II. It certainly is not a terrific serial by any means—it could definitely use a bit more action—but it's not a bad one either. The large array of characters are fleshed out a bit more than usual with directors Ray Taylor and Lewis Collins creating a solid and nicely measured pace to things.



SERIAL HEAVIES

Born in Hawaii, August 2, 1911, Norman (Rusty) Wescoatt held three world records as a swimmer and was a professional football player and wrestler before coming to films in 1947 as a member of Columbia serial producer Sam Katzman's group of stock players. The big, b u r l y

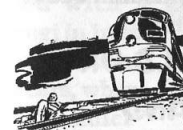


Wescoatt regularly got roughed up by smaller adversaries in 16 Columbia serials beginning with "The Vigilante" in 1947. Rusty's also in "Sea Hound" ('47), "Superman" ('48), "Tex Granger" ('48), "Congo Bill" ('48), "Batman and Robin" ('49), "Adventures of Sir Galahad" ('49), "Cody of the Pony Express" ('50), "Pirates of the High Seas" ('50), "Atom Man Vs. Superman" ('50), "Roar of the

Iron Horse" ('51), "Mysterious Island" ('51), "Captain Video" ('51), "King of the Congo" ('52), "Riding With Buffalo Bill" ('54) and "Perils of the Wilderness" ('56). Wescoatt also worked for Katzman in several Jungle Jim thrillers; "When the Redskins Rode" ('51) and "Brave Warrior" ('52). Following his serial days, Rusty was seen regularly on TVers such as "Kit Carson", "Gene Autry", "Wild Bill Hickok", "Hopalong Cassidy", "Roy Rogers", "Sky King" and "Tales of the Texas Rangers". Towards the end of his time in Hollywood, Rusty snagged two semi-regular roles...as the bartender on Robert Culp's "Trackdown" ('57-'59) and as the slightly crafty, but somewhat dimwitted Sgt. Holcomb on "Perry Mason". Rusty left the business in '65 and died September 3, 1987.

SERIAL BOO BOOS

In Ch. 8 of "Flaming Frontiers", Chief Thunder Cloud ties badman Charles Stevens' hands behind his back, but in the next shot Stevens' hands are tied in front of him (on horseback).



EPISODES

by Tom and Jim Goldrup

"The Perils of Pauline" was one of the earliest serials made, and in this 1914 chapterplay Pearl White became world famous. It is said of Pearl that



she was not only the Queen of Silent Serials, but that her name itself became synonymous with the cliffhangers, and that she did more

than any other star to make the serial a legitimate form of movie entertainment. The producers allowed Pearl to do all of her own stunts except the most extremely dangerous ones. For instance, in her final serial, "Plunder" ('23), the leap from the top of a bus to an elevated railroad platform was done by a stuntman—who fell to his death. Between "The Perils of Pauline" and "Plunder", Pearl also appeared in nine other serials: "The Exploits of Elaine", "The Romance of Elaine", "The New Exploits of Elaine", "The Iron Claw", "Pearl of the Army", "The Fatal Ring", "The House of Hate", "Lightning Raider" and "The Black Secret". She also appeared in a number of features, including "A Virgin Paradise" about which PHOTOPLAY wrote, "Pearl White's followers will not be disappointed in her. She has never seen a man or anything as modern as an electric light, nevertheless in a few weeks she is handling a gun like Bill Hart and wallops the villain with Jack Dempsey skill." Pearl retired from the screen in 1925 and died in Paris, France, August 4, 1938. Pearl was menaced by Paul Panzer, dubbed "the Villain's villain", in three serials, "Perils of Pauline", "Exploits of Elaine" and "The House of Hate". Panzer, while working in a feature titled "Thunder Mountain" in '25, talked to Preston Sawyer of the SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL about his work in serials. He remarked, "We made 'The Perils of Pauline' in New York in 1914. Undoubtedly that serial will continue to live as the greatest of them all—indeed it was one of the first, and had an immense vogue when the continued play was in its heyday of popularity. Although I have worked in a number of other serials, none have meant to me just what 'The Perils of Pauline' did." The writer mentioned

his impression of Paul Panzer (right), the man. "It has a l w a y s impressed me—this finding the portrayers of villain-



ous roles on the screen to be so much the opposite in reality. Panzer, for instance, has played some decidedly vicious roles on celluloid, yet a finer fellow in real life I have never known. And I could see, just in the brief period of my visit with him in the hotel lobby, that he is universally liked. One and all seemed to know and greet him. And he had a smile or a nod, often a handclasp, for them." Sawyer finished off his newspaper column on "The Perils of Pauline", stating, "The many thrilling episodes of the serial revolve about the perils cast in the paths of the young couple. Many were the fiendish plots, many of the cunning schemes destined to put them out of the way once and for all. But the drug-crazed brain of Raymond Owen (Panzer) fell short in the crafty machinations, and destiny judged that always should the youthful Pauline and Harry emerge alive and safe through danger." Listed in the column was a line of Panzer's dialogue: "Hello, Wrentz! This is Owen, Raymond Owen talking. Listen. Pauline is going. The idea worked. Station with your men tonight. And Wrentz, if the plan I gave you fails, I leave it to you to invent a new one. You understand? I don't want you to miss this time." And so, another plot was born and another attempt failed. Panzer would hiss, "Curses, foiled again," and another plot

would be hatched. The 5' 10", 170 lb. Panzer continued work in serials such as "Alias the Grey Seal", "The Masked Rider", "The Mystery Mind", "Hawk of the Hills", "The Black Book" and "Tarzan the Tiger". Paul Wolfgang Panzer was born in Bavaria November 3, 1872, and educated at Heidelberg University in Germany. He entered films at Vitagraph circa 1913 and continued to work in films through 1949. He died August 16, 1958, in Hollywood, CA. Among his final films was a bit—a "good guy"—in Betty Hutton's '47 portrayal of Pearl White in "The Perils of Pauline". Crane Wilbur, who portrayed Harry Marvin, appeared in the silent serial "Road O' Strife" ('15), and ended his film acting career after '36's "Captain Calamity", but carved out a career as a playwright and screenwriter, as well as a film director and producer on through '62. Crane also appeared as an actor on stage and in radio. He died October 18, 1973, in North Hollywood, CA, just a month before his 84th birthday. Also featured in the cast were Sidney Blackmer (his film debut) and Milton Berle as a child.



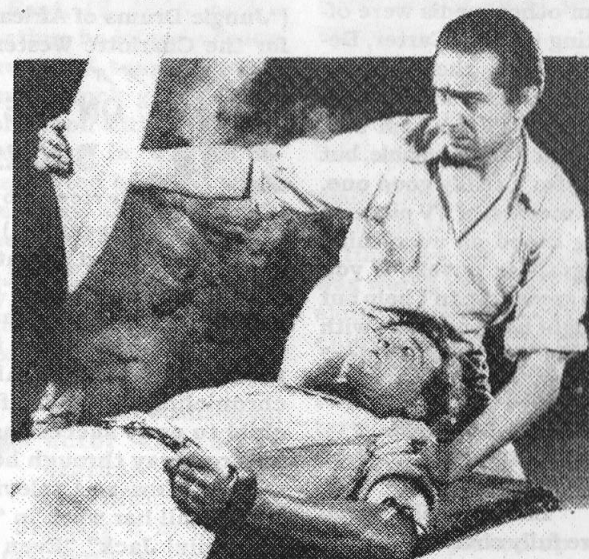
THE OLD ONES AND THE NEW ONES

by Jim Stringham

Frank Chandler, Chandu the Magician, returned several times. His adventures began on a Los Angeles radio serial in 1932 and ran for six years, with Gayne Whitman (later the voice of "The Masked Marvel") usually starring. Electrical transcriptions of many of the



original episodes still exist. A '48-'50 radio remake starred Tom Collins in a breezier, less menacing, version of the original. Stories and characters were repeated. When the 15 min. episodes for White King Granulated Soap became half-hour complete stories, some plots and minor characters appeared for a third time. Meanwhile, Edmund Lowe and Bela Lugosi had starred in a 1932 feature built around the first radio plot line. Stars were effective; the movie disappointing. Chandler was an American who had served with British Intelligence during "the war" (which war depended on which series) and had become fascinated by his encounters with the occult. He was allowed to resign from the service, then studied with a yogi in India for many years, where "Chandler" became "Chandu" ... the



Chandu (Bela Lugosi) rescues Bob (Deane Benton) from the pendulum sword of the Ubasti.

magician. The story began when he contacted his sister, Dorothy Regent, and her teenage children, Betty and Bob. Dorothy's husband Robert had supposedly gone down on the Athenia, one of the first passenger ships torpedoed by German U-Boats in the early days of the war. Now, Chandler has sensed danger to his family and returned to California. In the first episode, he has phoned the Regents from an airport 50 miles away, instructing them to lock the doors, pull the curtains, and turn off the lights. In an

outstanding bit of radio storytelling, they hear "Now, you may turn on the lights." Chandu was there in the room with them. Robert had been working on dangerous inventions prior to his disappearance and had been worried about the efforts of a German, Von Boden, who sought the same secrets. Radio, and the first movie, began with the search for Robert Regent. There were clues suggesting he was alive, and menaced by the evil Roxor. After a quest through the orient, Robert was rescued...then killed off, as having little more to contribute to the adventures.

Nadji, Egyptian princess, was Chandu's love, threatened by a danger which kept them apart. It was spelled out in a later adventure (first series only) where the Ubasti, followers of Ossanna, cat goddess, hoped to raise their

sunken continent of Lemuria to rule the world by the sacrifice of a princess of Egypt. There was only one. The '34 Principal serial produced by Sol Lesser was a most satisfactory retelling of these events, ranging from Chandler's magical transportation from the airport to the Regent's home, to his battles with the Ubasti. Bela Lugosi, promoted to hero, seemed to enjoy his role. Other players were effective, although Clara Kimball Young was considerably older than the previous Dorothy Regent. Elaborate sets

from "King Kong" and "Son of Kong" were reused. Chapters, especially the first, ran very short (as did the radio episodes) but left no sense of omission. Many scenes were taken directly from the radio serial. Format was 12 chapters, *ora* feature edited from the first four. This could be followed (if the exhibitor chose) by a preview of the remaining episodes, to be run for the next 8 weeks. A second feature ("Chandu On the Magic Isle") was issued later to tie up loose ends of the plot for viewers who had only seen the first. Serial adaptations of stories or characters from other media were often disappointing ("Chick Carter, Detective") but, this once, the movie respected its source. Prints, VHS and DVD, are readily available from several companies. They're watchable, but I'm still looking for a really good one. With big budget movies, or TV pictures or series, being based on everything from comics (graphic novels, if you prefer) to video games, I can't help but wonder what might be done today with sources as solid as "The Spider" pulps...or "Chandu, the Magician".



SERIAL CLIPPINGS

"Lionel Atwill's Serial Adventures" are fully covered in Todd Gault's 10 page article (11 photos) in **MAD ABOUT MOVIES #4**. \$10 Mid-night Marquee Press, 9721 Britinay Lane, Baltimore, MD 21234 <www.midmar.com> // Two page article/interview with Frankie Thomas—"Tim Tyler's Luck"—in **FILMFAX #105** (Jan.-Mar. '05). Same issue has a four page article on stuntman Eddie Parker and his monster films. // Hank Davis reviews Universal's "Call of the Savage" in **BIG REEL** (2/05), Republic's "Fighting Devil Dogs" in the 3/05 issue and finds Metropolitan's "Sign of the Wolf" weird and near-satirical in the 4/05 issue. // Interesting article on '30s-'40s

radio premiums (Capt. Midnight, Jack Armstrong, Little Orphan Annie, Bobby Benson, Buck Rogers, Sky King etc.) in **SPERDVAC RADIOGRAM V. 30 #8**.

MEETING SERIAL STARS

DICK JONES ("Blake of Scotland Yard", "Great Adventures of Wild Bill Hickok") and **MARJORIE LORD** ("Smilin' Jack") will be at the Memphis Film Festival in Olive Branch, MS, June 16-18. <www.memphisfilmfestival.com> // Serial Queen **ADRIAN BOOTH**, star of six serials including "Perils of Nyoka" and Captain America", and **STEVE MITCHELL** ("Jungle Drums of Africa") are slated for the Charlotte Western Film Fair July 13-16. //



ON THE SERIAL BOOKSHELF

(Review by Michael Fitzgerald.)

Marjorie Lord, best known as Kathy Williams on TV's long-running "Make Room For Daddy" sitcom, has recently penned an excellent, fast-moving memoir, **A DANCE AND A HUG**, chronicling the star's life from small child to early success as a teenager on Broadway through her varied career in films and television. Serial fans recall her work in "Adventures of Smilin' Jack" "Even my brother didn't know some of the facts I put in this book," Lord recently said. It's a book I personally couldn't put down—I read it in one sitting. We see the struggles, tragedies, marital misfortunes—her first husband, actor John Archer, was abusive, an alcoholic, and a womanizer. We learn things we never knew about this multi-talented lady. She worked with everybody from Wheeler and Woolsey and Bob Hope to Harry Carey, Andy Devine and Tom Brown. Fascinating reading, highly recommended. Reasonably priced at just \$15.95 plus \$3 shipping (\$5 to Canada, \$7 for international orders). Receive your per-

sonally autographed copy by purchasing it online through paypal. <marjorie lord.com> or send check or money order to PO Box 57593, Sherman Oaks, CA 91403. Specify how you want the book inscribed.

CHAPTER 13

ROBERT SHAW, 89, star of Columbia's "Son of the Guardsman" ('46), died of natural causes Jan. 3 in Austin, TX. Born Robert Gottschall in Dallas on Sept. 15, 1915, with a passion for acting, he joined a Dallas Little Theatre in '37, toured Canada with a summer stock group, then landed in Hollywood with a contract at 20th Century Fox in '41. His career was interrupted by WWII when he joined the Army, attending OCS. Shaw returned to films in '46 but, finding work sparse, left in '50 to re-join the Army, eventually rising to the rank of Lt. Colonel. He retired in '63 and moved back to Texas. (Thanx to Barry Martin.)

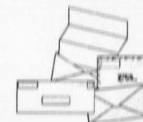
Veteran stunt-man, actor and horse trainer **SANDY SANDERS**, 85, died

January 2 in California. Born in Hereford, TX, after Army service in

WWII, Sandy put together a horse act. While working in Kansas, he was spotted by a movie company and encouraged to try his luck in Hollywood. It wasn't long before he was hired as Gene Autry's double at Columbia. Dick Jones ("Range Rider", "Buffalo Bill Jr.") told SR, "Sandy was a talent that had not been exploited.



He was an excellent horseman and a perfect photogenic double for Gene Autry. If Sandy dirtied his face up, grew a beard and kept his blond hair under a hat, he could pass as a pretty good villain. I enjoyed working with him, he was a heck of a good fight man." Besides his in front of the camera work, Sandy was a respected roper and horse trainer, riding stable owner and riding teacher. Seen in "Son of Geronimo", "Desperadoes of the West", "Don Daredevil Rides Again", "Commando Cody: Sky Marshal of the Universe" and "Flying Disc Man from Mars" serials along with dozens of westerns.



SERIAL MAILBAG

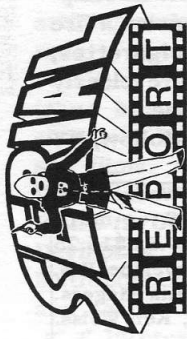
Thank you very much for another great SERIAL REPORT. I especially loved the article "Cliffhanging with Linda Stirling!" It was captivating and fun reading. This issue was worth the price for that article alone. Another article that was most enjoyable was the one about Roy Barcroft and "Manhunt of Mystery Island" in "Cliffhanger Commentary". Any time there is something about Roy Barcroft, it is great.

—Tom Adamsick, Peotone, IL

I recently picked up a DVD of the '43 "Batman" serial. While watching it I noticed a small pouch sewn into Batman's cape which I had never noticed before. Pretty soon I found out what it was for. In chapter 6, as Batman climbs down a fire escape, a dozen or so cigarettes, then the empty pack, are clearly seen falling out of his cape.

—Tom Weaver, Sleepy Hollow, NY

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